

Damn the Torpedoes!

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by [LordMcCoveyCove](#)

Summary

Season One, Episode One of Star Trek: Full Speed Ahead!

Stardate 43224.74: Newly-promoted Captain Krystine Leone is appointed to command the recently-refitted Nebula-class starship USS Farragut, after only fifteen years of excellent service to Starfleet. Her arrival at the Antares Ship Yards is met by friends she's made throughout her career, and of course, she is excited by the prospect of her first command. While she enjoys the festivities of assuming command, two strangers work feverishly within the ship's navigational deflector room toward some unknown purpose. As they ready the ship for warp speed trials, the ship finds itself going on a journey deep into the final frontier!

Notes

This story was originally published on 24 February 2009, at the original Ad Astra site, under a different name than my current nom-de-plume.

The events of this episode take place between the events of Star Trek: The Next Generation's third season episodes, "Booby Trap" and "The Enemy."

Teaser

Star Trek: Full Speed Ahead

By Lord McCovey Cove

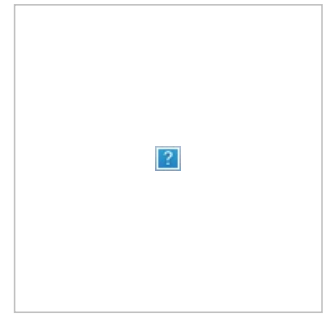
Episode One: Damn the Torpedoes!

NCC-60597 (USS *Farragut*)

Present Location Unknown

Main Bridge

Stardate 43224.74



The wail of the red alert klaxon could barely be heard over the trembling of the ship's hull under her feet. The comfortable chair she sat in carried those vibrations and massaged her back, but she had no time to enjoy it. The blue-green distortion on the main viewscreen looked like a long tunnel for as far as she could see.

"Mister Aspinall, reverse thrust!" she ordered, over the din.

The young helmsman turned his head to call back, "Helm is unresponsive, Captain." He tapped in a few more commands, but the console rewarded him with a negative response. "Braking thrusters are offline!"

"Damage reports coming in sections one through thirteen, decks six through twelve!" shouted the ops manager.

The tactical officer added, "I've lost weapons, and the shield emitters are offline!"

"Structural integrity field at seventy percent and falling."

"Damn it," the captain spat. Her right hand balled up into a fist, and she pounded it against the armrest in frustration. "Petra, divert auxiliary power to the structural integrity and inertial dampening fields!"

"Aye, sir!" said the chief engineer, seated at the rear engineering station. "Aux power engaged!"

The result was immediate. The vibration softened considerably and the background noise level dropped enough to allow the red alert siren to be heard once more.

From her station, the ops manager nodded. "IDF stabilized. The SIF is holding steady at sixty-seven percent, but I don't know for how long."

"Sensor pod is offline, I'm switching to the lateral array," reported the tactical officer. The viewscreen flickered as he switched the inputs. A few moments later there was nothing but the inoperative holographic display diodes behind the clear screen, and he added, "Sorry, sir, we lost the lateral sensors, too."

The ship still strained under the power of whatever it was they were caught inside of. The captain continued to eye the viewscreen, hoping that outside of her ship, the end of the tunnel was coming soon.

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS EARLIER...

NCC-60597 (USS *Farragut*)

Drydocked at Yard 39A, Antares Ship Yards

Navigational Deflector Control Room

Stardate 43222

The ship's massive navigational deflector allowed *Farragut* to traverse the expanse of vacuum without the fear of microfractures caused by small objects impacting against the hull as it travelled at high velocities. From the front, it looked like a huge blue dish carrying an orange-colored serving platter. At least, it looked that way to Saleb, as they looked out from behind the darkened dish.

His companion, Belkis, stood over him one level up, wearing a rather impatient expression. Saleb gave him a sheepish grin, as he had been caught enjoying himself. Belkis thought of nothing but the mission and the objectives, but Saleb liked to seek out the little pleasures of this particular excursion. They were pretty far from home, anyway, and he would be remiss not to suck every tender bit of information he could from it.

Saleb stepped down onto the primary access level and placed his Starfleet-issued carry-all on the deck. He kneeled and touched the access panel's control to allow it to slide out of his way. The deflector's control computer extended like a drawer, allowing him complete access to the key component of the ship's system.

Saleb sensed immediately when Belkis tensed above him. When Belkis turned his back to him suddenly, Saleb froze. The door to the corridor opened onto the deck above and someone was talking because he could hear the voice faintly.

Their work on the navigational deflector could not afford to be discovered or disturbed. Saleb slowly snaked his hand around the butt of his weapon. He was certain Belkis' hand was moving toward his own concealed weapon, underneath the engineering jumpsuit worn by all the civilian engineers aboard the ship. The good-natured tone of the unexpected visitor floated down to his ears.

"Pardon me," said the visitor. "I'm looking for junction two-one-Alpha-three. Would you happen to know where it is?"

A barrel-chested bruiser, Belkis tended to intimidate most people he met. He answered with his typical terseness, "It's three junctions forward, one deck up."

"Hey, thanks-

The door was closed from their side, cutting off the engineer midsentence. He heard Belkis' boots on the deck and he could feel his stare on him like before.

Feeling safe enough to pull his equipment out of the carry-all, he let out a deep breath and retrieved his very unStarfleet scanning device, along with a set of packets mounted on a technical pallet. "That was pretty rude," Saleb noted, not taking his eyes away from the control computer.

Belkis hissed. "How long?"

Saleb looked at the scanner in his hand. "This is not something we rush, Bel. I need to calibrate the device, first."

"Don't call me that!"

Out of view, Saleb grinned. "Watch the door, will you?"

"Hurry up."

He rolled his eyes at his companion. "Relax."

"You're treating this like it's a pleasure excursion!"

"I said relax. The ship launches tomorrow and the navigational deflector is going to pass their rather cursory inspection."

"You keep saying that, but I think you're underestimating them!" snapped Belkis as he rubbed at his forehead.

Saleb sighed, "We studied them for months, specifically for this mission. They do their little walkthrough, they make their little scans and they're done." For as long as they've worked together, he knew what the big man was going to do next. He grinned to himself in anticipation.

"You are an arrogant, aggravating, soulless, little man!"

"I love it when you talk dirty to me, Bel."

Belkis threw his hands up in exasperation. "Hurry up! We have people waiting for us!"

"Did you think I forgot?"

He pointed at him from above in a dramatic fashion. "I say it because you appear to need reminding. I don't want you running off to join Starfleet."

Saleb showed his teeth as he smiled. He looked up at Belkis. "Starfleet could use my help."

"Just remember that we asked you, first."

Of the many qualities a Kasui had, humor had yet to be developed. Saleb sighed. "I'm joking."

Belkis grumbled, "You better be."

Act One

NCC-60597/03 (Shuttle *Ptolemy*)
Spaceport Two, Antares Ship Yards
Cockpit
Stardate 43222.03

Captain Krystine Leone stepped in from the shuttle's passenger compartment. It was one of the type-seven shuttlecraft in use by Starfleet; with its curvaceous exterior, it reminded her of a reverse-colored panda bear. She ran a hand across the line of the console in front of her and tapped in a few commands to check on the shuttle's status. The yardmaster promised her a pilot, but she had yet to see him or her arrive, yet.

The *Ptolemy* was to be one of forty-seven auxiliary craft assigned to her ship, and just being inside it made her feel giddy at the prospect of assuming command of a Nebula-class starship. The shuttle felt like an extension of her impending status as the newest starship captain in the United Federation of Planets.

She stood from her seat and rechecked her stowed gear in the shuttle's storage area underneath the portside bench seat in the rear compartment. Satisfied, she turned to go back to the cockpit when she heard the familiar click of uniform boots on the shuttle's deck. Her eyes looked down at the shuttle's chronometer, counting away the seconds upon the corner display of the console.

The clicking stopped, just behind her. She turned her head, ready to introduce herself to the pilot, when she realized that she did not have to.

"Wilson," she smiled.

Lieutenant Wilson Nieves returned the smile, the skin around his brown eyes wrinkling as he did so. "Congratulations on your promotion, Captain."

"Thank you. How are you?"

He settled into the pilot's seat and activated the console. "I'm doing fine, sir."

"Last time I saw you, you were high-tailing it off the *Potemkin*. I heard you went home."

"I spent a few weeks on leave," he nodded. "But then I heard they promoted you and were giving you a ship. So, I decided to cut my leave short so I could at least see you off."

She winced, inwardly. He applied to be her new chief tactical and security officer, but he lost to a more qualified officer by the name of Daniel Hunter. "I'm sorry you didn't get the berth, Wilson. I really am."

Nieves waved her off with a shake of his head. "No, it's all right, sir. You went with the right man. Danny's going to make you proud." He turned his head, after signaling for launch clearance. "And besides, you've got Commander Elannis, too. So, you're definitely in good hands."

Leone grinned. Ariel Elannis, Wilson, and she had all served together on the Excelsior-class starship USS *Potemkin*, under the command of Captain T'Ciryra. When T'Ciryra received her promotion to rear admiral, the crew dispersed to different ships in the fleet, as *Potemkin's* new captain began to assemble his new senior staff. "I know she's already here."

"She's been here for weeks. She and your chief engineer have been making use of the time during the final stages of the refit," he informed her. "Control, this is *Ptolemy*. Engaging thrusters for launch."

The shuttlecraft shuddered slightly as the primary thrusters lifted it off of the deck and pass the energy barrier holding the atmosphere inside. They slipped into space from the launch bay.

"Petra Bartlet. I haven't had much of a chance to meet everyone... except Commander Kincaid."

"Your new first officer?"

"Yeah."

"I didn't see him on board."

"He's still at Starbase Three-One-Zero, waiting for us to pick him up. Actually, most of the crew are there."

Nieves asked, "Because of the warp tests, right?"

She nodded. *Farragut's* refit included an upgrade to the warp's core and field coils. It required a warp test to tune the coils to the new core and that would fall to Lieutenant Bartlet and her entire division. In order to accomplish this, they'll need to take the ship out away from any stellar body and engage the engines. "We'll only have a hundred forty-seven in crew, plus the civilian engineers who'll observe and consult. You know, the new core was originally intended for the *Sutherland*."

"You say that with such pride, sir."

"Are you making fun of me, Lieutenant?"

Nieves smirked, but forced a dispassionate expression onto his face. "No, sir, Captain, sir!"

Unable keep a straight face for very long, both dissolved into laughter. Leone placed a hand on his shoulder and smiled. "I'm glad you were able to make it to the ceremony."

"I wouldn't have missed it for anything, sir." Under his command, the shuttle banked around the marker beacon for Yard Thirty-Nine-Alpha, where *Farragut* was dry-docked. The bow of the shuttle swung into view and he knew it would be a special moment. "There she is, sir."

Leone looked away from him and out to the scene before them. Cradled within the span of the drydock facility was NCC-60597. From their vantage, she could see underneath the Nebula-class heavy cruiser's saucer, which was an exact duplicate of the saucer one would find on a Galaxy-class starship. She breathed, "Oh, my god..."

He expected her response. "Beautiful?"

"She looks... cold."

Nieves looked at the ship again. None of its lights were on, including the warp nacelles or the navigational deflector. "They're keeping her on internal power, right now. They already did the power system tests-"

"Two days ago," she interrupted him. "I've been keeping up with the reports."

He grinned. "Yes, sir."

"Can you take us under the saucer and then over?"

"Of course."

The shuttle dived below the 'waterline' of the saucer section and the large block numbers of the ship's naval construction contract number were as big as her eyes. Pride surged within her as she reached out with her hand to touch the viewport plexiglass, as though her fingers might pass through so she could touch the hull with her bare hand. When her fingers hit the glass, she pulled them back quickly and gave Wilson a sheepish grin.

The underside slowly crawled by the shuttle. They continued on and she noticed a big divot at the very bottom. "Hey, where's my gig?"

Wilson looked at the docking port for the missing captain's yacht and shook his head. "I don't know, sir. Probably being delivered later?"

She frowned. "Damn. I wanted to take a look at her."

"Did you have a name picked out?"

"No. I was hoping I would be inspired, later."

"Would you like me to find out for you?"

Leone shook her head. "No, I'm sure I'll find out once I'm aboard."

"Aye, sir." When they reached the navigational deflector, he announced, "I'm bringing her about, now." They moved along the port side of the saucer and floated up and over the lip.

The upper half looked more impressive than the bottom. *Ptolemy* approached the ship's bridge module and she looked closely at the viewports. "There's my ready room," she grinned uncontrollably.

"Yes, sir."

The shuttle's speakers crackled to life. A woman with a contralto voice called to them, "This is *Farragut* Control to inbound shuttle. Please identify yourself. You are entering the approach and landing for our main shuttlebay."

He tapped at his console and spoke, "Control, this is Shuttle Three, *Ptolemy*, on approach. We are inbound from Antares Central."

"Your landing code, please."

"Code Six-*Farragut*." The code announced to control that a ranked captain was on board, and additionally, that captain was their new commanding officer. "Request landing clearance at your convenience."

A different voice replied; a deep male baritone. "Code Six-*Farragut* acknowledged. Welcome, Captain Leone. Commander Tennyson sends his respects."

Leone spoke up. "This is Captain Leone. Thank you, Commander."

"*Ptolemy*, you are cleared to land. Approach vector alpha."

Wilson nodded. "Approach vector alpha, confirmed. On final approach, now."

The cavernous main shuttlebay looked more like a fully-fledged planetside spaceport than its name implied. Shuttles and pods of varying sizes moved within the bay and out, while other shuttles approached and landed on one of the four light strips available for them to do so. *Ptolemy* approached on the port-side strip and then guided to a waiting compartment where a staff of flight deck personnel burst forth to tend to the shuttle.

Leone smiled. "Smooth landing. Thanks for taking me over, Wilson."

"Anytime, sir," replied Nieves with a smile of his own. "I'll take care of post-flight. Why don't you look around and get familiar with your new digs?"

Even if he hadn't mentioned it, she would've done so. "I will. See you later?"

"I'll be here for the ceremony, so definitely, sir."

"Excellent." She didn't wait another moment, instead gathering her gear and making for the exit.

"Captain Leone, I presume?" asked the stocky dark-skinned man in the gold Commander's uniform.

"You presume correctly, Commander Tennyson."

He smiled and extended his hand. "Commander Robert Tennyson, sir. A pleasure to meet you."

"I feel like I know you, already, Commander," she replied, accepting the firm and warm handshake. Since the *Farragut* arrived at the Antares Ship Yards for its five-year refit nearly eight months ago, Commander Tennyson assumed engineering command of the ship. "I've read every one of your reports going back to the beginning of the refit."

"Then you have me at a disadvantage, sir," he said as they ended the handshake. "But I do know that congratulations are in order, Captain."

"Thank you. Do you prefer Robert or Bob?"

"Rob, actually."

Leone smiled and asked, "Rob, where are you bunking me?"

"Deck eight, section alpha one."

"Nice. Are they ready?"

Tennyson grinned. "In anticipation of your arrival today."

"Then, lead on."

"Aye, sir." He barked, "Yeoman, get the Captain's gear and follow us, please."

A yeoman third class moved quickly and offered to carry her duffel and garment bag. She relinquished both to the young enlisted petty officer and followed behind the broad back of Rob Tennyson.

Saleb finished installing the device and tucked the isolar connection behind the bulk of the control computer. He began entering in commands on the scanner, satisfied with the response and looked up.

Leaning over the rail, Belkis shot an expectant look at him. "Well?"

"It's ready."

"Are you sure?"

Saleb looked back down at his scanner. "I think so."

"You *think*?"

"Look, I've only done this once before."

"Lords, help me..."

"Do *you* want to come down here and do it?"

Belkis raised both hands in dismissal. "No, no." He sighed. "When we activate it, what's going to happen?"

"One of two things, I guess. Either, it'll work and we'll have succeeded..."

"Or?"

"Or it'll destroy the navigational deflector and possibly the entire bottom half of the ship."

"What?!"

Saleb ran a few more calculations and then snapped his head back up. "No, wait."

Belkis perked up. "Yes?"

"I was wrong."

He let out a sigh of relief. "Oh, good."

"Both could happen. We could succeed and then blow up."

Belkis placed his hand over his face and closed his eyes. "I should've stayed home."

Act Two

"We've been working triple shifts trying to get that new warp core online in time. Lieutenant Bartlet has been instrumental in completing that installation and activation for us," said Tennyson as they moved along deck eight.

Leone kept her eye on their location. Unlike her previous assignment, *Potemkin*, this ship's corridors were unmarked. The LCARS interface running the length was available in case one got lost aboard the ship, but she felt like it would be an embarrassment to not know where you're going. "Nothing short of impressive, Rob."

"Once you've settled in, sir, I'd be more than happy to take you on a tour of the ship."

"If you don't mind, I'd like to conduct my own tour."

Tennyson tilted his head. "That's not necessary, sir. I would be delighted to show you around."

"A captain needs to learn her ship backwards and forwards, Commander. I'd prefer to find my way around and get to know her on my own terms."

"Of course, sir. If you need any help, please don't hesitate to call me." He stopped in front of the last door at the end of the corridor and pointed. "You're in here, sir."

When he tapped on the door controls, the doors did not open immediately. Leone looked at him. "Problem, Rob?"

Tennyson chuckled nervously. "Uh, no, sir. Give me a moment, please." He continued to work on it, until the doors finally snapped open with violent speed.

"Wow," said a wide-eyed Leone. "When you tell those things to open, you don't mess around."

"We'll get that fixed for you, sir."

"At your leisure. No rush." She stepped inside and took a look around at her new home. It was twice the size of a normal stateroom, with a small working area that acted as a private office. She would be able to work from here or in her ready room attached to the main bridge on deck one. But the view was the most impressive part of the stateroom, showing the entire forward arc of the ship's saucer section.

As the yeoman entered and placed her things on the couch, she smiled at Tennyson. "This is quite a stateroom."

"I'm pleased you like them, sir." He stood behind her and asked, "May I inquire as to when you would like to assume command?"

"I was thinking tomorrow morning at around eleven hundred."

"Not tonight, sir?"

"Are you that eager to shove off?"

"No, sir, I only meant that most captains like to take the reins the moment they step on board."

Leone smiled. "I'm sure they do, and with a ship like this, I must admit... it's tempting. But I need to meet with key staff and I want to walk the ship through a few times."

"Understood, sir."

"I was also hoping to meet Lieutenant Bartlet sometime today."

"Tennyson to Bartlet," he said, calling to the air. "Report to the captain's stateroom."

"Thank you."

"My pleasure, Captain." He dismissed the yeoman and then returned his attention to her. "Anything else I can do for you?"

She folded her arms and thought about it briefly. With a smile, she nodded. "Have Commander Elannis report here, too."

"Aye, sir."

"Thank you, Rob."

Tennyson inclined his head before leaving her alone in the stateroom.

Leone placed her hand against the bulkhead and felt the smooth finish of the standard-issue Starfleet beige color that lined every corridor and deck aboard the ship. The distinctiveness of the *Farragut* lay in the carpeting. She had been aboard the *Enterprise*, with its beige walls and salmon-colored carpeting. Teal graced the trim of her carpets and the decks, to give *Farragut* a somewhat unique look.

She grabbed her duffel and tossed it onto her large queen-sized bunk. Yet another change from her last post, where she had a twin-sized bunk to sleep in, and her feet tended to scoot over the edge of it while she slept. The bunk's comforter carried a Starfleet insignia and the words, "U. S. S. FARRAGUT NCC-60597" stenciled upon it. Standard-issue equipment, even for the ship's new master and commander.

By the time she hung her uniforms in the closet near the bunk, the door chimed. Leone moved into the front room and beckoned her caller to enter.

Lieutenant Petra Bartlet wore her brown hair up in a regulation-length pony tail, with all of the hair swept back away from her face. She looked rather unassuming within the confines of Leone's stateroom, as though she were there for some sort of punishment rather than a simple meeting.

"A pleasure to finally meet you in person," said Leone as they shook hands.

"Yes, sir," replied the chief engineer meekly. Her grip was nonexistent, letting the captain's hand fall away rather than releasing it.

Leone made certain her smile was as pleasant as could be. "I have been keeping up with all the engineering reports you've submitted to Starfleet. I must say that I've been most impressed with your work on this refit, and I can't imagine a better qualified chief engineer in the fleet."

The praised caused the young woman to blush. "T-Thank you, sir."

"In fact, according to your last report, I understand we can get underway tomorrow as scheduled?"

"Yes, sir. W-We do a final walkthrough tomorrow morning, after the c-ceremony."

"Very fine work," said Leone. "Do you prefer to be called Petra?"

"Petra is fine, sir. My mother calls me Pet, for short."

"Petra it is, then." The door chime sounded. "Enter."

A stern-looking lieutenant commander, wearing the same gold-colored uniform as Petra, entered the stateroom and ceremoniously stepped forward. "Lieutenant Commander Ariel Elannis, reporting for duty, sir!" She stood at attention, heightening the contrast between her own tall athletic form and the short stature of Lieutenant Bartlet.

Leone narrowed her eyes at Elannis, and curtly returned the salute. "At ease, Commander!"

Elannis' feet spread apart in the proper stance, and her eyes continued to stare up and ahead. She did not make eye contact with Leone.

Petra looked between the two officers, obviously unsure of her footing.

"Well. I see that Starfleet has decided to punish me by sending over the bottom of the barrel of available officers," said Leone with folded arms. Elannis could not respond, as she was not asked a direct question by her superior. "I had hoped that they might've asked you to resign, or cashiered your lousy ass out of the service."

Elannis said nothing.

"Do you have anything to say for yourself?"

"Permission to speak freely, sir?"

"By all means."

Elannis fixed a hostile glare at Leone. "Who do I have to fuck to get off this ship?"

Leone shot a quick glance to their would-be chief engineer and read the mortified expression on her face. Enough was enough. "God, Ariel," she said with a wink, "who don't you fuck these days?" She broke her demeanor fully, and embraced her old friend.

Ariel laughed, accepting the embrace tightly. "*Captain* Leone. It has a nice ring to it."

"I'm still getting used to the weight of that fourth pip." The confused expression on Petra's face shot a pang of guilt through Leone's stomach. "I'm sorry if we frightened you," she said to her.

"N-No, sir..." said Petra with a shake of her head. "It-It was quite entertaining," she added unconvincingly. "May I h-have your leave, sir?"

"Of course."

Without a further word, Petra departed the captain's stateroom.

Leone frowned and leaned against her desk. "I think we might have broken our chief engineer."

Ariel looked back toward the door and said, "Shit. We don't have any spares."

"Hey," said Leone, changing the subject, "Wilson's here."

Ariel winced. "Yeah, did he talk to you about the job?"

"I think he understands. He spoke pretty highly of Dan Hunter."

"He's actually pretty hurt by the fact that you passed him over," Ariel said, placing a hand on her hip. "He held up his leave to make himself available, and now he's got nowhere else to go."

Leone sighed. "Damn."

"I don't know this Dan Hunter guy from Adam, so I don't know what he did to convince you to pick him over Wilson..."

"Don't get defensive on me."

"C'mon, Kry. Wilson's the best tactical officer you've ever served with."

"Wilson's also an officer with a good career ahead of him, and he should be getting experience on other ships that don't have me on it," replied Leone tersely. "I'm looking out for him. If he has three tours with me, it's not going to look good."

"Like he cares whether or not it looks good. He's a good friend and good officer."

Leone wondered if there was more to the conversation than she was letting on. "Are you hurt I didn't choose you as my XO?"

Ariel raised her hands. "Hey, I'm just glad I made the cut."

"Uh-huh."

"Speaking of executive officers... nice pick. Jesse Kincaid's a rather attractive man."

"You've met him?"

"Not personally, no." Off Leone's look, she continued, "I've seen holos."

"I'll bet you have. No sleeping with the XO. That's a direct order."

"I *am* a mature woman. I know what's right and what's wrong."

"Except when a semi-attractive person comes within sensor range. Then, you're like a Betazoid in the damned *phase*."

"You exaggerate."

"I certainly do not." Before Ariel could protest any further, Leone raised her hand and continued, "We were on Risa, two years ago, enjoying leave... or rather, *you* did. You put that stupid statue out and five guys and three girls showed up."

"I had a good selection, I'll admit."

"You took them *all*!"

"You're just jealous because you're tied down to one guy and have no opportunity to experience an orgy or two," Ariel said, while pointing at her.

"I'm surprised you had enough energy to walk after that."

"Can we please talk about something other than my libido?"

Leone nudged Ariel with her shoulder. "I missed you."

Ariel grinned. "Same. So... how's the family?"

"Mom and Dad send their love, and wonder what it's going to take for you to visit. They haven't seen you in two years, now."

"I know. I feel guilty about that, but..." Ariel gestured around the stateroom with her arms and said nothing more.

Leone continued, "John's doing well. He's on Starbase 6, working on their power systems. Dom's starting school in a week and is looking forward to it. Mom's already planning his eleventh birthday."

"Damn. I can't believe he's going to be eleven this year," said Ariel with a shake of her head. "Seems like just last year you were looking for a surrogate to carry him."

"I know."

"I'm surprised your mom's going all out for birthdays."

"I think she feels guilty about not being there to raise me and is making up for lost time with my son."

"You should think about bringing him with you. This ship will be carrying some families. Why not let yours join you?"

Leone shifted uncomfortably on her desk. "The idea of having John and Dom here doesn't sit well with me. We get into all sorts of scrapes, and I want them to be safe. I'm not really sure I even like the idea of having families on board in the first place."

"Seems to be the general consensus among starship captains these days. Then again, you lot are weird when it comes to change, aren't you?"

"Aren't we all?"

"Point."

"John asked me about the possibility of having them join me before I got here, and the compromise was that for at least a week a year, Dom would get the chance to experience life on a starship."

"And he's not coming?"

"Depends on work. The Federation has him bounding all over the place, it's hard to really get a hold of his schedule long enough to put some concrete plans into effect. He's going to have to use his vacation time, well in advance, in order to get more than a few days off, let alone a full week."

Ariel nodded. "In the meantime, you've got me, right?"

"I was just about to say that," lied Leone with a sad smile.

Her friend pushed herself away from the desk and stood up, putting her hands behind her back. "Should we walk some decks?"

Leone's enthusiasm returned in full force. She stood up, herself and pulled down her uniform top from the bottom of the shirt. It snapped away all the wrinkles that had accumulated whilst seated. "Absolutely."

Ariel pulled on Leone's arm and they moved out into the corridor. "Good. Because you have got to see your new bridge."

"I'm looking forward to it."

"By the way, could Commander Tennyson *be* any hotter?"

"Ariel, please..."

One of the aspects of starship refitting was the modular nature of design in Starfleet. Everything aboard a starship could be replaced with a new module with very little effort. Ships of the Nebula and Galaxy classes used the same saucer design, and so modules built for one could be easily transferred to the other with nominal modifications.

When the turbolift doors parted to allow Leone and Ariel passage to the main bridge, one of the engineering crewmen working on the ops console looked up and smiled. "Captain on the bridge," he announced.

Leone felt her cheeks heat up. "As you were," she said, quickly. Her eyes scanned over the familiar layout of the bridge ultimately ending up at the location of her new chair. Except, it wasn't there. In fact, it was the only chair that wasn't on the bridge.

An ensign wearing engineering gold quickly moved down to greet them. "Sorry, sir. There was a minor malfunction in the chair's display unit. We removed it to have it looked at."

"It's all right, Ensign," she said, with a raise of her hand. "I'm just taking a look around."

"Yes, sir."

"I assume the ready room is... well, ready?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Leone looked back at Ariel and shot her a smile. "Thank you, Ensign."

The two officers moved into the ready room. "Wow, they really know how to treat captains around here, eh?" said Ariel, as soon as the doors were closed.

"I suppose so," said Leone. Her right hand was already moving along the sleek black mahogany-like surface of the desk, until she was standing behind the desk. "Nice office."

"Better than your last one."

"My last office was a desk in a closet on deck six."

"That's what I mean. Gotta love these new bridge modules."

"I was thinking the same thing."

"Kind of bare, though, isn't it?" said Ariel, as she looked around the room with her arms crossed behind her back. Her eyes settled on something in the corner. "What the hell is that?"

Leone's eyes moved in the direction Ariel was pointing in. "It looks like a bust of some kind." It was the bust of a man, perched atop a column, in the corner of the ready room between the two couches.

Ariel moved to read the inscription. "David Glasgow Farragut, Admiral, United States Navy."

"That bust must have been left here by the previous captain," said Leone.

"He looks mean."

"He was the one who said, 'Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.'"

"I see," Ariel said, her interest moving on. "I never really cared for ancient Earth history."

"You should. There are a lot of lessons to be learned from history."

"Back to the ready room. We could put some other art pieces in here."

Leone thought about it. "On the *Enterprise*, Captain Picard keeps a lionfish in his."

"T'Pol kept a Vulcan harp on display in her ready room."

"You saying I should bring my saxophone or something?"

"I know you haven't played it in ages, but it wouldn't hurt to bring a little personal touch to your area."

"That's what your quarters are for."

"This is where most of your meetings are going to take place. And I'll bet you spend more time in this room than in your quarters."

Leone had not considered that. She'd never had a ready room like this before, and the only times she used an office as an executive officer was to conduct the ship's business and complete all of the paperwork required by Starfleet. "I suppose so."

"You're a mighty captain, now. I think your space should reflect your rank a little better."

"Well, this mighty captain doesn't feel like there should be a whole lot of pomp and circumstance when it comes to leadership. I plan on keeping things informal," assured Leone.

"Hmm." Ariel moved toward the replicator and asked the computer for a cold glass of water. When it materialized, she pulled back and sipped at the glass. "Hey, what's this door lead to?" Without waiting for an answer, she moved toward the single door and it slid open.

Leone looked over and grinned.

"Aha..."

"Yes."

"This is where your mighty captain's ass perches when you're... deep in thought?"

"Yes... that is the captain's head. What did you think it was?"

"A closet?"

"Was I supposed to hold it the entire time I'm assigned to this ship?"

Ariel laughed. Suddenly, she snapped her fingers. "I got it. How about a scale model of the *Majestic*?"

The Miranda-class USS *Majestic* was her mother's first command. "Maybe," considered Leone. "I think that would really please my mom, actually. Y'know, for the two times she's going to visit me. Plus, building one would-"

"Computer, replicate a scale model of the Miranda-class starship *Majestic*, as it appeared under the command of Commander Angelina Leone," ordered Ariel of the replicator. She set her drink down to retrieve the model.

"Please specify scale."

"One to six-fifty."

The replicator performed as it was requested, and within its materialization receptacle lay the *Majestic* as Ariel specified. It even had a stand to perch it on. She withdrew it from the replicator and set it upon a stand between the viewport and the door. "I think it would look really nice right here."

Leone sighed. "Well, I would have preferred to build the model myself, but then when am I going to have that kind of time?"

"Exactly."

"And I think a nice big piece of art over the couch would look really nice, too."

Ariel finished her drink and set it down on the replicator pad, where it dematerialized. "Now, you're coming around to the idea. Let's go see what else we can find."

They moved back out onto the bridge and aft, toward the observation lounge. They crossed behind the tactical station, which was open and exposing the circuits behind the LCARS panel. A door to the right of the bridge's head, led aft on that deck through a small hall that also provided access to the bridge control systems.

The lounge's massive viewports were angled as the outer hull was designed to. It provided a view aft and above the ship somewhat, while the long angled table provided for ten people to sit around it. Viewscreens on the port and starboard side could be used for presentations.

Leone could see the scaffolds of the drydock facility, as well as the massive sensor pod mounted on the dorsal section of the secondary hull. Shuttles moved in and out of the main shuttlebay below them on deck five. On the opposite bulkhead from the view, were all the ships named

Farragut in a brass rendering, including the one they stood upon.

The first thing Ariel said when they saw the observation lounge was, "You can keep your cramped little ready room. *This* is my office."

Act Three

Doctor Sovera adjusted the display on her desktop terminal within the office of the chief medical officer aboard *Farragut*. Four of the sixteen physicians on her staff had already reported for duty, and of the entire staff, only a third had reported in so far. Although she did not feel displeasure at the fact that the rest of her medical staff awaited pick up at Starbase 310, she would have to make do with the four doctors and ten medics.

The doors to the main area of the sickbay opened and a loud and raucous conversation suddenly occupied her area. Annoyed by this, Sovera rose from behind her desk and began with a simple, "Please maintain a low volume when spea-" She stopped as soon as she recognized who it was. "Captain, my apologies."

"No, no," said Leone with a smile. "We were just taking a tour of the ship, and I thought I would drop by and say hello."

"I see."

"I'm really very glad you were willing to take this assignment."

"It seemed like a logical choice, Captain, given the list of available officers."

"It wouldn't have been the same without my favorite doctor. I don't let just anyone work on my person, you know."

Sovera merely inclined her head.

Leone gestured to her companion. "You remember Ariel, right? She's agreed to join us as our new chief of operations."

"Good to see you again, Sovera," said Ariel with a wave of her hand.

She turned to Ariel and nodded. "And you, Commander Elannis. It is fortunate that you're here. Your last physical was more than twelve months ago."

Leone chuckled. "You heard the doctor, Ariel. Time for your physical."

Ariel looked as though she wanted to fight it, but instead let out a breath and nodded. "Fine. Let's get this over with."

"I'll see you later, then."

"Actually, Captain," said Sovera, "your physical has been overdue as well."

"Uh, yes, well..."

"I would appreciate it if you would please take care of that, now."

Ariel grinned widely. "You heard the doctor."

"Yes," Leone said with a hesitant nod. "However, I am going to have to postpone that another couple of days until after I have a chance to see the ship and assume command. Technically, I'm not assigned to this ship, yet."

"Hey!" said Ariel. "What kind of switch is that?"

"R.H.I.P, *Commander*," said Leone with a waggle of her eyebrows. "Enjoy your physical."

Sovera called after her, "I will hold you to that, Captain." Once she left, she turned her attention to Ariel. "I am expecting to pursue that matter with Captain Leone in two days. Please sit on the biobed, Commander."

Ariel pushed herself onto the biobed, as requested. "She's just going to shine you on, like always."

"I do not understand the human compunction for avoiding regular medical maintenance." She picked up her medical tricorder and ran it over Ariel's body. "You are eating too much fat, Commander. Your cholesterol levels from consumed sources are high."

"Oh, damn, Doctor. Don't sugar-coat it for me."

"Reduce your intake of foods high in fat, or else you will be in danger of not meeting Starfleet medical requirements for the well-being of its officers." She continued to take her readings. "If you require assistance in this area, I can schedule an appointment with a nutrition specialist once we reach Starbase 310."

"Yes, sir."

"Have you been maintaining your pheromone inhibitor program?"

"Yes, sir. Every day."

"Very good."

"I think so, too," replied Ariel. "Hey, what does R.H.I.P mean?"

"Rank Hath Its Privileges, Commander."

Ariel snorted. "Figures."

The liaison officer between the civilian and Starfleet engineers was a young ensign named Thaddeus Symonds. He was not a member of the official crew, but on loan from the yard's engineering pool. His job was to coordinate the activities of the civilian engineers with the Starfleet engineers, including seeing to their housing and other necessary accommodations to ensure they were able to complete their work on schedule.

Saleb hated him. "He's a humorless man who wouldn't know a good time if it slapped him in the face."

"I like him," admitted Belkis with a snort. "He knows how to be efficient at what he does."

"You talk to him, then. I'm sure you'll be the best of friends."

"Fine by me. At least I know he's not here to do some sight-seeing."

Symonds saw them approach and he immediately took out his PADD. His fingers flew across it as he looked at them expectantly. "Report, gentlemen."

"Ensign, we have completed our diagnostic on the navigational deflector subsystems," said Belkis. He handed over a PADD to the ensign. "Our final report, sir."

"Thank you, Mister Belkis. I will pass it on to my superior officer."

Saleb forced a smile on his face as the ensign directed his attention to him. He gave Symonds a little wave, to which the ensign did not respond to. Instead, the ensign sniffed at him and returned his attention to Belkis.

"Is there anything else we can do for you tonight, Ensign?" asked Belkis.

"No, Mister Belkis, Mister Saleb. I have you down as part of the civilian detachment to observe the warp trials tomorrow. You may enjoy your evening until tomorrow morning, oh-eight-hundred hours."

"Thank you, Ensign."

"Thank you."

"Thank *you*," added Saleb, his tone dripping with sweetness.

Symonds grimaced. "Good night."

As soon as they were out of his earshot, Belkis grunted. "You shouldn't annoy him."

"He is in a state of constant annoyance. I'm certain nothing changes before or after I speak with him," replied Saleb, as they moved toward the engineering junction on deck twenty.

In the opposite direction, a female Starfleet captain entered the junction and passed by them without paying them much attention. Both Belkis and Saleb noticed her, and their formerly jovial demeanor quickly switched to serious.

When she passed out of range, Belkis leaned in and asked, "Was that her?"

Saleb's mouth was dry. He didn't realize they would get so close before the time was right. "Yeah."

"You're sure this is going to work?"

"Damn. It'd better, right?"

"For your sake."

"For our sakes, Belkis."

They continued down the corridor until they reached a turbolift. They shared a junior officers' suite on deck ten, just a few doors down from the lounge at the bow of the ship. Once there, they felt safe enough to begin accessing the ship's primary computer system, and monitored access to the navigational deflector control computer.

"I'll take the first shift," offered Belkis. "Get some sleep, and I'll wake you in eight hours."

"That's right kind of you," said Saleb with a large smile. "Unless you're planning to torture me in your sleep?"

"No."

"Thank you."

"It's better to be awake while your gullet flaps so loud, that I think you're drowning in your own spit."

Saleb's smile dropped. "Oh."

"Also, you worked most of the day to secure our little project, and I'm sure you could use the rest. Since I'm still lucid, I trust myself to react

quickly to any situation that may come up, while you would be wrestling your own fatigue at the same time."

"Why, Belkis..." said Saleb, grinning. "You *do* love me."

Belkis did not turn his head from the common area, instead he activated the display and watched. "If you're not asleep in the next ten seconds, I'll be happy to help you lose consciousness."

"Night!" said Saleb quickly.

Act Four

Leone read from a PADD in her hands. "To Captain Krystine Leone, from Starfleet Command. You are hereby requested and required to assume command of NCC-60597 (USS *Farragut*) effective Stardate four-three-two-two-four-point-seven. Signed, Rear Admiral Alynna Nechehev, Starfleet Command."

Commander Tennyson called out to the air, "Computer, transfer all command code to Captain Krystine Leone. Authorization: Tennyson-alpha-one-one-niner."

"Command codes transferred," replied the computer. The public address system activated and the computer's voice could be heard on all decks. "Attention. USS *Farragut* is now under the command of Captain Krystine Leone, effective immediately."

The assembled group within the ship's large lounge on the forward section of deck ten applauded. Captain Leone and Commander Tennyson both wore their dress uniforms, as they finished the change of command ceremony.

Tennyson smiled, "Congratulations, Captain. Take good care of her for me."

"Thank you, Rob," she smiled. "I will." As Tennyson stepped down and left her standing on the elevated platform alone, she began to address them:

"All hands, this is Captain Leone. I want to thank you for being here on this occasion, and to assure you that I will endeavor to continue the grand tradition set by this ship's predecessors. We will be departing Antares within the hour to begin warp trials, and then we will head to Starbase 310 to pick up the rest of the crew.

"Until that time, I am appointing Lieutenant Commander Ariel Elannis as acting executive officer. Department heads, make your initial reports to her. Thank you. Leone, out."

She stepped down from the platform and nodded to the other officers as they extended their hands in congratulations. Leone moved toward Ariel, who embraced her.

"Congratulations, Krys."

Leone closed her eyes as she accepted the embrace. She didn't really care if people saw them. Friendship was not illegal in Starfleet, and protocol be damned. She stepped back and smiled. "Thanks, Ariel."

"Would you care for something to drink?" Ariel asked as she gestured to the flutes of champagne set out by the lounge staff.

"No, thanks." She clenched her hands in front of her, hesitating to speak with so many people around.

"Uh oh, you've got that look in your eye. What's up?"

"I'm itching to get under way."

"How may I scratch your itch?"

"Take the conn. Have the bridge seek departure clearance from the Yard Control, and then have anyone staying behind disembark."

Ariel did not hesitate, recognizing the official tone in her friend's voice. "Aye, sir," she said with a nod, and left without another word to carry out her orders.

"Sir," said Wilson Nieves, from behind her. "Congratulations."

"Aw, thank you, Wilson. I'm really glad you were here for this."

"Like I said, I wouldn't have missed it for anything." He took a sip from his flute and added, "In fact, I'd be more than happy to man tactical during the warp trials. I'm looking for a ride to Starbase 310, anyway."

With a grin, Leone chuckled. "I'd like that. I'm sure Ariel will enjoy your company on the bridge. As will I."

His demeanor brightened considerably. "Yes, sir. Thank you."

When he did not move immediately, she grinned. "Now, please."

Wilson put his flute down on a passing tray and nodded. "Aye, sir."

She continued to accept the best wishes of the people assembled there, but she did not want the ceremony to continue for too long, lest they delay their departure. Within minutes, Ariel's voice sounded on the public address system, announcing their clearance for departure and for any personnel wishing to remain behind, to disembark immediately.

People filed out of the lounge, as did Leone. She returned to her quarters and replaced her dress uniform with the uniform of the day. The two-piece Class A Starfleet uniform was a welcome change from the old one-piece jumpsuits they wore only four months prior. Captains were afforded variations on the uniform, being in command as they were, but Leone did not like the jackets or undershirts that came with it. Instead, she wore the same uniform as everyone else.

"Captain on the bridge," announced the flight controller, Lieutenant (jg) Gregory Aspinall. She knew his name only because of the fact that his mother, Joy, served as the commanding admiral of Starbase Eleven. The Aspinall and the Leone family were cordial with one another, being both Starfleet legacies.

Leone said, "As you were," as she moved toward the command center. Ariel had been seated in the center seat, but she rose from it to offer it to her friend.

"Enjoy," said Ariel, *sotto voce*. "It's quite comfy." She moved forward to assume the ops station from the officer manning it.

Wilson Nieves called out, "Yard Control signals we can depart when ready, Captain."

Leone settled into the seat and admired its comfort. Ariel was right. "Thank you, Wilson. Ariel, clear all mooring and disengage the docking clamps." She hit a control on her armrest and said, "Bridge to Engineering. Switch us over to internal power."

The lights did not flicker even once as the ship began generating power for itself. The intercom sounded once more as the call came from engineering. "Bartlet, here, sir. We're now on internal power."

"Mooring cleared," reported Ariel. "The airlock has been sealed. Disengaging dock."

The sound of metal releasing carried throughout the ship, and the viewscreen showed that they no longer had a connection to the drydock facility as the scaffolds moved independent of the ship.

"Distance to drydock is ten meters," said Aspinall. "Twenty. Thirty. Fifty."

"Hold position one hundred meters from the dock and then ahead slow on the thrusters," ordered Leone. "Petra, can we go to warp speed once we clear the outer marker?"

"Yes, sir. Warp speed will be available by the time we reach the outer marker."

"Understood."

The scaffolds began to move out of view as the ship sailed forward under its own power for the first time in nearly eight months of refitting.

"We are now free and clear to navigate, sir," said Aspinall. "Approaching the inner marker beacon for the first turn."

On the screen, the tiny beacon flashed in the night as it swung into full view. It drew closer and closer, until Leone could read the markings on its side.

"Entering the departure lane, Captain."

"Full impulse power, Mister Aspinall."

"Increasing my speed to full impulse power, aye, sir."

The little beacon blew by as the ship engaged its powerful sublight engines. The outer marker beacon was a lot larger and prevented use of the warp drive within its boundaries. *Farragut*, as well as all other traffic, would be relegated to sublight speeds while operating within the jurisdiction of the Antares Ship Yards.

"We are now approaching the outer marker," announced Aspinall. "The warp drive is now online."

Leone envisioned the nacelles powering up and coming to life, with the bright red of the Bussard collectors to the bright blue color of the drive assembly. Now her ship was alive, and awaiting the order to leap forth and do what she was built to do. "Engineering, stand by for warp speed."

"Aye, sir. We're monitoring down here."

"We're clear of the outer marker."

"Lay in a course for the trial zone," said Leone.

Aspinall nodded. "My course is now three-oh-one mark one. Course entered, sir."

The captain of the *Farragut* grinned. "Let's stretch her legs, Mister Aspinall. Warp five. Engage."

"We're at warp!" said Saleb excitedly.

Belkis nodded with a grunt. Both of them stood before a display of the master situation monitor with a look of anticipation. "Warp five and holding steady. We should reach the trial zone in under an hour at this speed."

Saleb tapped in commands excitedly and kept himself from laughing out loud as he realized how close to their objective they were.

"Calm down."

"We're really going to do it, Belkis. I mean... a shuttle was one thing, but we're going to try it with a starship as large as this. You realize that we're going down in history for this?"

"One way or the other, I suppose."

Saleb groaned. "Seriously, Belkis, you need to learn how to have some fun."

Act Five

"We are now approaching the warp trial zone, sir," said Aspinall's voice over the intercom.

Leone spoke to the air. "Acknowledged. We'll be right there." She rose and nodded to Ariel. "Let's get back to work."

Ariel sighed and gestured to the board as she followed Leone out to the bridge. "Great, now you get more time to plot my demise."

The captain shot her a devious look as they sat down at their respective stations. Nieves reported from the tactical station that there were no other contacts. "Thank you, Wilson. Signal Antares Yard Control that we have arrived. Helm, slow to full impulse."

Both officers acknowledged as the viewscreen's stars became dots instead of streaks. "We're now at full impulse power, Captain."

"Antares signals acknowledgement, sir," reported Nieves.

"Bridge to Engineering," called Leone.

"Bartlet, here, sir," said Petra from the turbolift doors. She walked to the aft engineering station and activated it. "I'm ready when you are, sir."

Leone stood up and announced, "Petra has the conn."

"Full impulse power- no, they're slowing to an all stop," said Saleb with his eyes locked onto the helm monitor they had established in the shared quarters on deck ten. "We have to move, now. As soon as they slow to stop, they're going to cycle the warp coils for pre-tuning procedures."

"How long do we have?" asked Belkis. He grabbed the carry-all with their equipment and headed for the exit.

Saleb replied, "Ten minutes." They exited into the empty corridor and walked briskly for the turbolift. "Auxiliary navigational deflector system, deck sixteen, section ten."

"Warp coil cycle complete," announced Petra. "Nebula baseline warp procedure loaded and engaged. Helm, zero mark zero-nine-zero."

Aspinall replied, "Course laid in, Lieutenant."

"Thank you. Captain, we're going to field saturate the warp engines for-"

"Sir, the navigational deflector has gone to one-hundred-fifty percent of normal," reported Nieves suddenly.

"Confirmed," said Ariel. "Forward sensors are detecting a large tachyon surge approximately one thousand kilometers off the bow."

"Petra?" asked Leone.

"It's not part of the program, Captain. I don't know why the deflector would be-"

Ariel called, "A quantum field is forming, Captain."

A large, blue-green field shifted in and out of visual range, like a ripple against a very dark pond.

"Shut down the navigational deflector," ordered Leone.

Petra entered in a quick set of commands from her station, but the console would not let her have her way. "The shutdown command is not being accepted by the control computer, Captain."

"Then send someone down there and pull the damned plug!"

"A rift is forming, sir. I'm reading quantum-level manipulation of the space-time continuum through the field," said Ariel in a worried tone. "Gravimetric forces are starting to pull us in."

"Helm, back us off, full impulse," said Leone, reseating herself in the center seat.

"Full reverse, aye, sir."

"No effect," said Petra. "We're not moving away from it."

"Distance to the event horizon?"

"Nine hundred kilometers. Eight-fifty," corrected Ariel. "Damn, it's getting stronger. Seven hundred."

"Petra, can we go to warp?"

"We need to veer the bow off so we can point the ship away from the rift."

"Helm, hard starboard."

"Sir, the helm is not responding."

"Three hundred kilometers, Captain."

"Red alert. Shields, Wilson."

"Shields are up."

"Two hundred. One hundred."

Leone called to the ship's intercom, "All hands, brace for impact!"

The wail of the red alert klaxon could barely be heard over the trembling of the ship's hull under her feet. The comfortable chair she sat in carried those vibrations and massaged her back, but she had no time to enjoy it. The blue-green inferno on the main viewscreen looked like a long tunnel for as far as she could see.

"Mister Aspinall, reverse thrust!" she ordered, over the din.

Aspinall turned his head to call back, "Helm is unresponsive, Captain." He tapped in a few more commands, but the console rewarded him with a negative response. "Braking thrusters are offline!"

"Damage reports coming in sections one through thirteen, decks six through twelve!" shouted Ariel.

Nieves added, "I've lost weapons, and the shield emitters are offline!"

"Structural integrity field at seventy percent and falling."

"Damn it," Leone spat. Her right hand balled up into a fist, and she pounded it against the armrest in frustration. "Petra, divert auxiliary power to the structural integrity and inertial dampening fields!"

"Aye, sir!" said Petra. "Aux power engaged!"

The result was immediate. The vibration softened considerably and the background noise level dropped enough to allow the red alert siren to be heard once more.

From her station, Ariel nodded. "IDF stabilized. The SIF is holding steady at sixty-seven percent, but I don't know for how long."

"Sensor pod is offline, I'm switching to the lateral array," reported Nieves. The viewscreen flickered as he switched the inputs. A few moments later there was nothing but the inoperative holographic display diodes behind the clear screen, and he added, "Sorry, sir, we lost the lateral sensors, too."

The ship still strained under the power of whatever it was they were caught inside of. She continued to eye the viewscreen, hoping that outside of her ship, the end of the tunnel was coming soon.

Suddenly, the hull was calm. She didn't have to wait for Ariel to tell her, she knew they were out of whatever it was they were in.

"Report," ordered Leone, pushing herself up out of her chair.

"Reinitializing all key systems," said Petra.

Nieves called out, "Sensor pod is back online. I'm activating the viewscreen."

Stars greeted them as the screen came online. A nebula in the distance shimmered and danced before the bridge. In the background, various systems came back online that had been unavailable while they were within the anomaly.

Leone turned to look at Petra from behind the horseshoe rail. "Petra, what happened? Why did the navigational deflector create that quantum anomaly?"

Before she could answer, Nieves reported, "Captain, there's a vessel on approach at high speed."

Leone returned her attention to the viewscreen, trying to see if the vessel was visible. "Yellow alert. Are our shields online?"

Nieves shook his head. "Negative, sir."

"Petra?"

"Sir, I'm trying to reinitialize the emitters," said Petra quickly.

"We're being hailed."

"On screen."

The viewscreen blinked and an angry-looking male face greeted them. "Identify yourselves."

Leone stepped forward and replied, "My name is Captain Krystine Leone, of the Federation starship *Farragut*. We mean you no harm."

"You have penetrated deep into the core of Tristnor Hegemony territory. Your vessel is forfeit and your crew is now the property of this ship."

Hold your position and prepare for boarding!"

TO BE CONTINUED...

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